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SUBJECT: SWEDEN GRABS THE LAST OF THE TURKEY

¶1. (C) Both Hakan Emsgard, MFA Director General for Europe, and Peder Spangberg, Turkey desk officer, confirmed to us today that Sweden was moving forward with the opening of Turkey's environment chapter of the EU acquis. The report is "technically finished," Spangberg said, and is currently being reviewed in a working group. If approved, it will be forward to COREPER for final decision on either December 17 or 18. Sweden is currently planning on hosting two Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) back-to-back on Monday, December 21. One IGC will be on Croatia, to open two chapters, and the other on Turkey, to open the environment chapter. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt is planning to attend both IGCs on behalf of the Presidency.

2.(C) Emsgard reported that some EU Member States had reservations about the Commission's report on Turkey's environment chapter. The Bulgarians, Austrians and Greeks all have concerns related to the technical details on the benchmarks and criteria. Commission staff are working closely with these three Member States to satisfy their concerns. Spangberg said any of the three could, in theory, stop the process; "these countries are objecting on both technical and political grounds. Some of the technical concerns are valid." But both Spangberg and Emsgard said they would be "very surprised" if Sweden were unable to open the environment chapter before its EU Presidency concludes on December 31. Spangberg indicated that in the December GAC, ministers agreed that the environment chapter should be opened this year. If the technical report is not passed to COREPER this week, then Sweden will schedule an IGC between Christmas and the New Year, Spangberg added.  
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